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Teacher vs. Student Centered

Different situations in school call for different types of teaching and different types of learning. I’m going to talk about teacher centered vs. student centered classroom approaches.

Student centered learning emphasizes divergent points of view in the classroom. While this does allow for multiple correct answers, I would rather there be just one focused answer. In a class such as “Restoration Drama,” a student-centered approach is necessary, which is why I thought that class was miserable.

Teacher centered approaches emphasize a very organized classroom with, for example, assigned seats. While this does keep the classroom in order, I would rather have a more flexible classroom, like when we had class outside the other day… But obviously that wouldn’t be a great idea if it were raining.

“Discovery-based learning” is a theme of student centered learning, which, in my mind, creates a classroom where the students are just trying to guess the main point of the lesson. While the approach that is teacher oriented says it calls for “extreme” amounts of teacher talk, I’d still rather have someone telling me exactly what is expected of me instead of students teaching the class. They’re called teachers right?

Motivation for student centered learning comes from internal incentives whereas it comes from external controls for teacher centered learning. I guess that means that teacher centered motivation comes from “this is for extra credit.” I think that this is a great way for students to be motivated, but if teachers are offering free points, then anyone can be motivated. I’d rather have a class where the strong is separated from the weak but when teachers offer free points then anyone can do well in the class. I prefer the student-oriented stance for motivation.

In terms of discipline, I prefer that the teacher is not overly concerned about the behavior of the class, but there are some laws that need to be laid down in the classroom. Teachers need to make sure their students aren’t on their phones, but at the same time it’s their problem if they miss what the teacher said. My art history teacher last year, though, was way too concerned about phone use and had 3 teacher’s aids in the room looking for kids using their phones… That may be taking it a bit too far.

I would consider myself an “on-task” learner, so I prefer a teacher-centered classroom climate in that aspect. Student centered learning, however, calls for a classroom of question-askers, which is also fine for the classroom. I like just being told to do a task and then doing it, but asking questions in the class is also important. I guess I’m fine with either method.

“Leadership styles” in the classroom for teacher centered classrooms calls for the teacher taking over in the class. Student centered learning calls for the students to do their share of leadership. I think that it is important for the teacher to find a medium between the two by not being overly controlling, but not being a babysitter for the class.